USDA Grant Funding Webinar

## Reconnect Rural Broadband Grant and RUS-DLT Grant

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Learn Design Apply, Inc. (LDA) is a grants consulting and management company with 50+ years combined experience in grant management and writing, program development and relationship management with underserved communities, technology firms and healthcare providers in the USA.

Industry leader specializing in identifying, securing, and managing grant funding in partnership with clients in private, non-profit, and public sectors.

Our experienced team of funding and business development specialists provide a comprehensive range of services, uniquely tailored to our clients' goals.
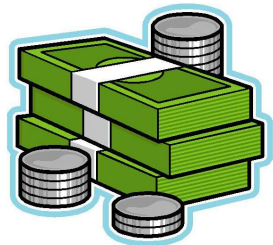
Service Offerings

Grant Newsletter and Information Webinars

Specializing in Federal, State, and Foundation Funding Sources

Post-Award Project Implementation and Management Assistance

Individual and Organization Registration Assistance With:

- Dun & Bradstreet
- System for Award Management (SAM)
- Grants.gov

Professional Grant Writing and Editing

Funder Prospecting and Guidance

Public Sector Sales Support (Enterprise)

Procurement Guidance

LDA Program Offerings

- Provide in depth grant support throughout grant process
- Education and training on grant programs
- Assist with identifying needs and project development
- Help develop a funding strategy
- Comprehensive grant application/writing assistance
- Post-funding support for project implementation

Pre-Project Discussions

Broad discussions about:

- Demographics (location, statistics, etc.)
- Your needs and the projects you have in mind
- Existing funding and past grants
- The creation of a funding "umbrella" and long-term strategy
- Project budget priorities
- Internal approvals and key internal team players

ReConnect
Round 2 – out now!

Rural Broadband Grant, Loan/Grant & Loan Program

The Basics

100% Grant: $200M total funding -- $25M max. request

50/50 Loan-Grant Program: $200M total funding -- $25M/$25M max request

100% Loan Program: $200M total funding

Due Date: March 16, 2020

Eligible Applicants:

- Cooperatives, non-profits, or mutual association
- For-profit corporations or limited liability companies
- States, local governments, or any agency, subdivision, instrumentality, or political subdivision thereof
- A territory or possession of the United States
- An Indian tribe (as defined in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. § 450b)).

Funding Restrictions

For both the 100% Grant and the 50/50 Loan-Grant Program, no more than 90% of your total Proposed Funded Service Area(PFSA) can have 10/1mbps or greater residential service.

- This is **in bold** for a reason! More than 50% of Round 1 applications were challenged and found to have access to at least 1 household with 10/1mbps service

- "When in doubt, take it out!" Applicants are strongly encouraged to thoroughly assess their proposed areas for access to 10/1 residential service. An application can have multiple pfsas, and you can "donut-hole" areas of concern, eliminating risk of reviewers finding 10/1 and potentially invalidating your application.

The Monster Grant
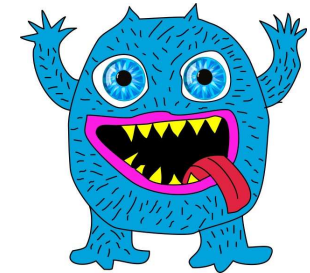
- This isn't a grant for "beginners"
- While it requires less in the way of narrative sections, the level of detail (particularly in the area of financials and environmental) is enormous.
- Get started early! There are numerous registration requirements before you can even start an application in the on-line portal
- Map your areas, get cost quotes, pull historical and projected financials, and start as early as possible.
- Depending on the technologies you propose and the geographies you cover/traverse, the Environmental section can be challenging. You may want an Environmental consultant
- Speaking of consultants… up to 5% of your federal award costs can be for pre-application costs (writing, environmental, financial, broadband/engineering, etc.

That said, don't be discouraged!

- This grant is an important resource designed to bring broadband to some of the most rural and difficult to serve areas of the country.

- The possibility for positive impact is endless… educational, healthcare, economic, social opportunities and more will occur as a result of this important funding.

- https://www.usda.gov/reconnect

Before We Begin...

- ✓ Forget everything you know about federal grants... *never assume!*

- ✓ When in doubt, refer to the **current year's** Application Guide!

- ✓ Leverage resources and relationships...GFRs, USDA website, State Director, etc.

What's it All About?

The DLT Grant provides funding for interactive "real time" distance learning or telehealth projects that provide rural residents with access to content and/or services, helping to bridge the digital divide.

The DLT Basics

USDA — United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development

- CFDA: 10.855
- Due Date: April 10th, 2020
- How Much: $71.7M total funding
- Matching Funds: 15% of the Federal Request *(about 13% of total project costs)*
- Award Size: Up to $1M in federal funds
- Priorities: Special Consideration Points Given For –
  - Opportunity Zones
  - Substance abuse (including opioid, not limited to opioid)
  - STEM… 10 points max;
  *You can only receive 10 total points for Special Consideration, even if you meet multiple criteria**
- Submission – **Grants.gov (*recommended!!*) or hard copy**

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Let's Cut to the Chase!

🟢 Eligible Expenditures

✓ **Capital Expenditures –** interactive distance learning or telemedicine equipment, video infrastructure, ancillary core network devices necessitated by the project, internal wiring, *software*, *licensing*, digitally connected peripheral devices and associated services.

✓ *Up to 20%* of the budget can be spent on broadband related expenditures

✓ *Cloud Services*, if adequately defined and justified

🔴 Ineligible Expenditures

✓ **Recurring Expenses –** transmission costs, existing operational costs, *salaries,* benefits, contractual, supplies, etc.

✓ **No Indirect Costs! No Evaluation Costs!**

✓ **Unrelated technology purposes --** this is not a grant for tons of PCs/Tablets… the main purpose is for the interactive video. Peripherals that help deliver content or services via the video transmission are provisionally eligible

Licensing/software and services must be associated with an endpoint in the budget

Who Can Apply?

Various forms of eligibility

1. **Organizational Eligibility –** For Profit, Non-Profit, Tribal Entity, State or Local Org, Schools, Universities, Community & Technical Colleges, Libraries, Pre-K's, Clinics, Health Care Centers, Hospitals/Clinics, Workforce Development Offices, First Responders…. *It's easier to tell you who is NOT eligible (federal orgs, sole proprietors. orgs. in coastal barrier zones).* <u>Fiscal Agent (applicant) MUST have a DUNS and active SAM registration.</u>
2. **Programmatic Eligibility –** Proposed use must be focused on <u>interactive</u> distance learning and/or telehealth projects that ***provide benefits/services to end users in rural communities***
3. **Rural Eligibility –** Overall Project Rurality score of at least **20 points**
4. **Required Match –** Projects must match at or above **15%** of the federal requested amount (just over 13% of the overall project costs)

Types of Projects

Limited only by your imagination!

✓ **School to School –** *sharing teachers & courses, enrichment*
✓ **School to Health Center –** *school based health; prevention / wellness, mental health/substance abuse programming*
✓ **School to Higher Ed –** *dual enrollment, teacher training*
✓ **Higher Ed to Higher Ed –** *connecting satellite campuses to expand course offerings, bridging programs, workforce dev*
✓ **Libraries & Other Community Centers –** *lifelong learning, Adult Ed, Workforce development, Enrichment*
✓ **Medical Centers to Clinics –** *primary & specialty care delivery; CME*
✓ **Clinic to Clinic or Hospital to Hospital –** *sharing doctors, dentists, nurses or allied health professionals; sharing CME, wellness & prevention programs*
✓ **Mental Health & Substance Abuse Clinics to anyone –** *delivering behavioral health and/or substance abuse treatment, education, therapy, etc.*
✓ ***State/Local Orgs –*** connecting the "local" organizations together to share employee learning / training (DOH, Head Start, WIBs, etc.)

Project Design

- Before you can begin constructing your project, you need to first articulate what your project is about!
  - Is it Distance Learning, Telemedicine or a combination of both?
  - What problems are you trying to solve through the use of these technologies?
  - Who is your target audience?

- Think on a broader scale!
  - Expand your thinking beyond your initial "focus" issue (ex: need for a Spanish Teacher)

- Identify potential project partners/participants that will benefit from the educational or health content or services you propose to delivery and/or receive

Design Examples

1. **Hub(s) & Spoke(spokes)** -- Content or service provider connecting to end user sites who will receive the content or services
   - Medical Center with Specialists to smaller hospitals or clinics without local specialists
   - Community College connecting to K12s to deliver dual enrollment

2. **Hub-End User to Hub-End User** – Sites that will provide experts to share content or services connecting to remote sites who will receive the content and services, and deliver back ***different*** content and services.
   - Rural High School with Mandarin teacher connects to another rural high school with a Spanish teacher. Students at both sites receive foreign language classes not available locally.
   - Rural hospital to Rural Mental Health & Substance Abuse clinic. Hospital connects to MHSA clinic for services not available locally. Clinic connects to hospital for Continuing Medical Education and training.

Design Examples, cont...

3. Non-Fixed – Occasionally, you have a hub site that wants to provide services or content to anyplace in a given geography. In this instance, your Objective Scoring is determined by the single HUB site. Example:

   • Visiting Nurse Services – a Home Health Org would like to send a visiting nurse to anyone within their service area (ex: 2 county area). The Home Health Org is the HUB and their physical location would be used to define rurality and poverty scores.

4. Hybrid – Sometimes a project will have both a fixed and non-fixed component. In those cases you score the non-fixed portion first, and then include it as a line item to be averaged in with your fixed site calculations. Example:

   • School District wants to put video endpoints in all rural schools to share instruction, but they also want to deliver home school courses to any students within the geography they cover.

   • CHC wants to connect to hospital for fixed site telemed, but also wants to connect on demand to any site that their EMS team visits within their coverage area.

Major Grant Components

Objective Scoring	Subjective Scoring	Required but not Scored	Required but not Scored
Rurality – up to **40 pts**	Needs & Benefits – up to **30 pts**	Executive Summary	Official Grant Budget & Match letter/worksheet
Economic Need – up to **30 pts**		Financial Info & Sustainability	Certs / Assurances
Special Consideration – up to **10 pts**		Statement of Experience	Proof of Legal Existence / Eligibility
		Technology System Plan	State Rural Development Letter

Where to Start

1. SAM Registration
   - Do you have a SAM registration?
   - Is it active?
   - Is the POC still employed at your Organization?

2. Grants.gov
   - Are you registered and account associated with SAM?
   - Is your AOR authorized for submission in eBiz?
   - Create a workspace

Needs & Benefits

- The only scored narrative section

- Subjective – worth 30 points!

- This section is the differentiator – put your effort here!

- Be a story-teller... this is where you can really demonstrate the need for your project and resonate with the reviewer.

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Community Involvement and Needs Assessment

- Consider holding a planning meeting (or meetings). Provide a snapshot of the posted invitation (newspaper, web, etc) and include details... date, time, and who attended.

- Develop a planning committee. List their names and titles, and keep a record of the dates that you meet, who attended, and what was discussed. Include a wide variety of stake-holders.

- How did you identify the critical needs that will be addressed by your project?
    - Surveys
    - Climate assessment
    - Other data points
      (test scores, health or economic data)

Assessment leads to
Needs Identifcation & Project Design

- When identifying your Needs, try to think broadly
- Start with your primary need and then consider other ways distance learning or telemedicine connections can help address problems in your target area. *Example:*
- Primary need: *to provide primary care in a school based health setting*
- Other possible needs / use cases:
    - Prevention / Wellness Programming
    - Special Education Services (PT, OT, Speech, Psychological Testing)
    - Expanding access to teachers, families, community members
    - Access to specialty care (ENT, Allergist, Mental Health Professionals, etc.)
    - Continuing Medical Education / Professional Development

How does your Project Address those Needs?

- Describe your project. How do the technologies you are proposing help you address those needs?   Just a couple of lines is fine!

"This project places telemedicine endpoints, along with digitally connected medical scopes, in each of our schools. This will allow real time connections to healthcare experts for the delivery of primary care, addressing the critical lack of access to geographically accessible healthcare."

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Budget Worksheet

Line Item #	Site Name	Description	Unit Cost	# of Units	Extended Cost Grant or Cash Match funds	In-Kind Match
1	ABC College	ABC Education Cart - mobile	10,000	2	20,000	
2		Mandatory Annual Maintenance - 3 Yrs	3,500	2	7,000	
3		Installation	2,000	2	4,000	
4		ZuDexio Cloud infrastructure license	1,000	2	2,000	
5		Instructor PC	500	2		1,000
6	DEF High School	ABC Education Cart - mobile	10,000	1	10,000	
7		Mandatory Annual Maintenance - 3 Yrs	3,500	1	3,500	
8		Installation	2,000	1	2,000	
9		ZuDexio Cloud infrastructure license	1,000	1	1,000	
10		Instructor PC	500	1		500
11	GHI High School	ABC Education Cart - mobile	10,000	1	10,000	
12		Mandatory Annual Maintenance - 3 Yrs	3,500	1	3,500	
13		Installation	2,000	1	2,000	
14		ZuDexio Cloud infrastructure license	1,000	1	1,000	
15		Instructor PC	500	1		500
16	JKL Vocational School	ABC Education Cart - mobile	10,000	1	10,000	
17		Mandatory Annual Maintenance - 3 Yrs	3,500	1	3,500	
18		Installation	2,000	1	2,000	
19		ZuDexio Cloud infrastructure license	1,000	1	1,000	
20		Instructor PC	500	1		500
				Totals	82,500	2,500

A	**Overall DLT Project Budget** (Sum of Total Grant/Cash column and In-Kind Match column)	85,000	
B	**Less Proposed Cash Match** (as documented on Leveraging Worksheet)	8,600	Cash + Inkind
C	**Less Proposed In-Kind Match** (From Total of In-Kind Match Column)	2,500	11,100
D	**DLT Grant Request (A-B-C)**	73,900	
	Grant to Match % check (15% minimum req'd)	15.02%	
	formula: =(B+C)/D		

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Things to Remember…

- Sites should be listed in the same order as site worksheet
- Sequentially list all line item expenditures associated with each site
- Provide enough detail (product name, description or part#) for the reviewers to evaluate the associated price per unit
- Only identify line items in the match column if you are committing in-kind match!
- *We discourage In-Kind match… if you have to use it, limit its use and justify!*
- Work from a vendor quote (or quotes) – confirms the pricing
- 10% Rule – Training and Engineering Services are limited to 10% of the total budget
- None of the sites receiving budget can provide the services or products in the grant budget (you can buy things from yourselves)
- No Indirect Costs! No Evaluation! No Recurring Costs!
- Up to 20% of the budget can be spent on "broadband" activities

Q: How do I know what technology and I need?

A: *Ask manufacturers and vendors to provide you with information and demonstrations. Ask your peers for references!*

Q: How do I get Pricing?

A: *Request one or more vendor price quotes (ask that they quote by site to make it easy to translate to your budget)*

Q: What if I change my mind once the grant is submitted?

A: *RUS has a budget modification process – permission vs forgiveness*

Q: When can I start making purchases?

A: *Purchases can be made the day after the grant due date; no reimbursement until grant is awarded and paperwork completed*

Pre-Submission Tips

- Is your SAM Registration Active (know and extend the expiration date)

- Make sure that the budget numbers on your SF-424 *match exactly* with the numbers in your Executive Summary, Match Worksheet, Match Letter and Budget Worksheet.

- Look for the show-stoppers:
  - Are your match letters on letterhead, with signature block and signature of someone with obvious fiscal authority? Do they state the match amount?
  - Are all narrative sections complete and attached/included?
  - Are all site tables consistent with the Site or Rurality Worksheet?
  - Did you remember to include support letters, surveys and other back-up?
  - Is your Budget behind the Scope of Work?
  - Do you have a geographic map and vendor quote(s) included in the Telecom Plan?

- Have at least 2 sets of eyes during your review – you can get too close to your project and not see errors!

- **How long is it between submission and a funding announcement?**

  It generally takes 3-4 months minimum to score and announce awards

- **Can I start purchasing once I see an awards announcement?**

  Technically yes… but you can't start the reimbursement process until you have completed your Legal Agreement and other paperwork and have a Release of Funds letter.

- **What are the RUS purchasing requirements?**

  RUS asks you to follow your own internal (written) purchasing processes, and to make sure they meet the minimum OMB standard

- **Do I need to go to RFP / bid?**

  See above! This depends on whether you can purchase from a competitively bid contract vehicle, what your award size is, etc.

Post Submission FAQs

- **Do I have to wait to start the competitive process?**

  No! In fact, you can make this part of your application process. It may help you find the solution that's the best fit for your project, and you can include this comparison in your Technology Plan. Start your bidding or comparison process when you are ready – just be sure to go through this process as prescribed by your Procurement Department

- **If I have to go to RFP, how long does that need to be posted, and where?**

  RUS does not have any requirements in this area. Refer to your own internal requirements. If they are not specific, then you can decide to post info on your website, in a local paper, etc. Just make sure all potential vendors have access to the same information / criteria.

- **If awarded, when will we get our check?**

  There is no check per se. You draw down funds at the rate at which you match. You can submit paid or unpaid invoices to document what you are purchasing (aligns with approved budget)

- **Besides drawing down funds, are there other reporting requirements?**

  Yes, an annual report updating RUS on how your project is going, funds spent, implementation progress, etc. is required once per year, with a final close out report. No evaluation or data submission is required.

- Can I have more than one HUB?
- Do I need to average in HUB/End Users?
- What if I need to include less rural sites due to political implications?
- Do I need to include sites that will provide content or services if we are not requesting any budget line items for those sites?
- Others?

- Do we need to have a formal (legal) consortium to submit a consortium application?

- We need more bandwidth to optimize our project. Is that an eligible expense if we can document the need?

- Are we required to submit a Grants.gov application?

- If we file a paper (hard copy) application, do we still need an active SAM registration?

- The eligible expenses include annual maintenance. Can we include maintenance expenses associated with existing equipment that will be an integral part of this project?

- Are Cloud Services eligible?
- Can we request multiple licenses that provide interactive video connectivity or infrastructure?
- Is In-Kind Match eligible?
- A vendor offered to write this grant for me, and promised "no strings attached." Is that ok?
- Other ????

Thank You!

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